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(Shakespeare)

Kemble

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**MACBETH,**

**AND**

**KING RICHARD THE THIRD.**

London: Printed by G. Roworth,  
Bell-yard, Temple-bar.



KING RICHARD THE THIRD.

AND

MACHETT.

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London : Printed by C. Roworth,  
Bell-yard, Temple-bar.

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MACBETH,  
AND  
KING RICHARD THE THIRD :  
*AN ESSAY,*  
IN ANSWER TO  
R E M A R K S  
ON SOME OF THE  
CHARACTERS  
OF  
*SHAKSPEARE.*

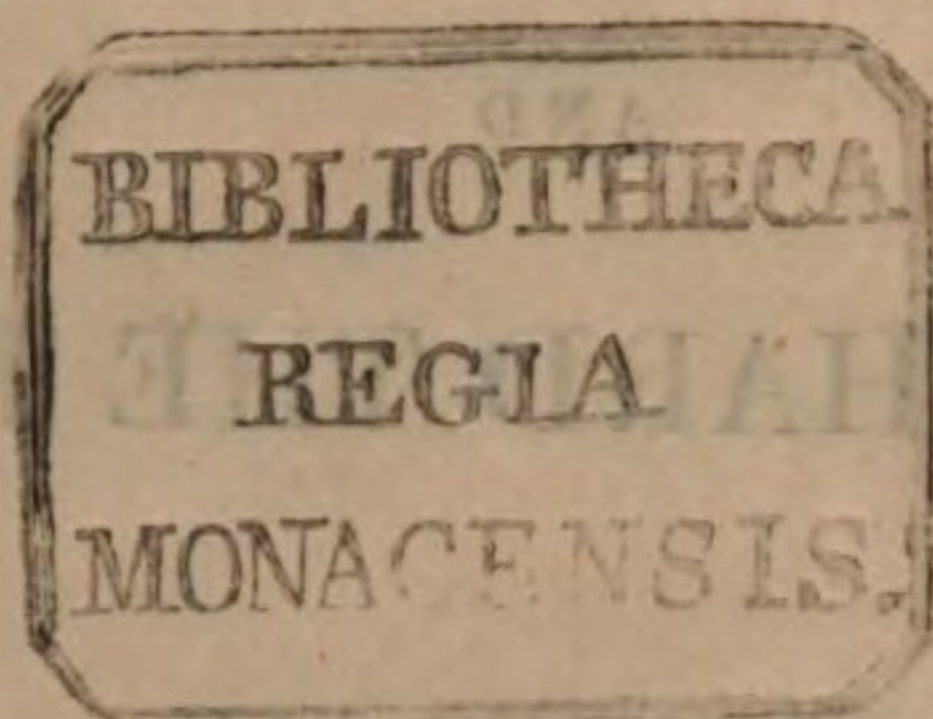
By J. P. KEMBLE.

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LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1817.





REMARKS

ON SOME OF THE

CHARACTERS

OF

SHAKSPEARE

By J. P. KEMBLE.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1817.



TO  
THE  
DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

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MY LORD DUKE,

BE pleased to accept  
this tribute of my gratitude. That it  
is the constant character of your  
Grace's nature, to conceal the benefits  
which it confers, I well know; and I  
am fearful lest this offering should  
offend, where I most anxiously wish  
it to be received with favour: Yet,



when a whole happy Tenantry are voting public monuments to perpetuate the memory of your Grace's paternal benevolence to them, I hope, my Lord, that I am not, any longer, forbidden openly to acknowledge my own great obligations to your munificence.

Your Grace has thought me worthy of your bountiful patronage; and I may not presume to say, how little I deserve it.

May your Grace live, long to be the ornament of your ancient and illustrious Race,—and may your princely Name continue to latest time, revered and beloved in a Posterity emulous of all those public



and private Virtues, which are now  
honoured in your Grace, and can meet  
their full reward then only, when  
your Country shall have occasion to  
mourn your loss!

With the most profound respect, and  
the most grateful affection,

I am,

My Lord Duke,

Your Grace's devoted servant,

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE.

*June 17, 1817.*

Great Russell Street,  
Bloomsbury Square.



[ 12 ]

and private virtues which are  
recounted in your letter and can meet  
their full reward then only when  
your country shall have occasion to  
renew your loss.

With the most profound respect and  
the most grateful affection,

I am,

My Dear Sir,

Your Grace's devoted servant,

JOHN THOMAS RICHARDS.

June 17, 1717.

Received of the  
Honble. Secretary of State  
the sum of £100



THE passages quoted from *Remarks on some of the Characters of Shakspeare*, (by William Whateley, Esq.) are printed in Italics; and the references at the bottom of the page, are to the edition in 8vo. London. 1785.

The references to Shakspeare correspond to the edition by George Steevens, published, with his latest corrections, in twenty-one volumes, under the care of Isaac Reed, in 1803.



The present paper is an abstract  
of the observations of the  
William D. Hoar, Esq., and is intended  
to be a summary of the facts of the case  
as to the children of the late Isaac Hoar.

The account of the children's conduct  
to the children of the late Isaac Hoar  
with the late Isaac Hoar, in the  
columns under the name of Isaac Hoar, is

1809



**MACBETH,**  
**AND**  
**KING RICHARD THE THIRD.**

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**P**LAYS are intended, by employing the united powers of precept and example, to have a good influence on the lives of men. It is not necessary towards this end, that the drama should be modelled to the individual form recommended by Aristotle for its construction, and the distribution of its



parts.\* Though the observance or neglect of the much-debated unities in the concoction of a play, as Dryden expresses himself, may excite the praise or censure of the learned and curious; yet it must be allowed, that the Grecian or modern arrangement of acts and scenes is but a conventional merit or defect, that can contribute nothing either to the amend-

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\* That Sophocles, Euripides, and their contemporaries, were not inextricably bound by the unities, and that they might at their choice, and successfully, have varied the ancient form of tragedy, will not perhaps appear an improbable conjecture, when we reflect that, though a decree of the government did very materially alter the structure of comedy in Athens, yet it is no where found, that the New comedy was less favoured and followed in the days of Menander, than the Old had been in the time of Aristophanes.



ment or depravation of the mind. The stage, without a necessity for further restraints, promotes the cause of good morals, whenever, by the personated imitation of some history or fable,—drawn to an impressive conclusion by principles and actions natural to the agents who produce it,—we are instructed to love virtue and abhor vice.

Shakspeare's disregard of the rules to which the tragedians of antiquity appear to have generally confined themselves, has been much insisted on by Voltaire, and others both of his nation and our own, as an insurmountable obstacle to the theatrical effect of his plays; and, indeed, in their skirmishes against them, they have employed every



weapon of wit, ridicule, and misrepresentation.\* But these trammelled

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\* A diverting example of French criticism occurs in the following note on a passage in Voltaire's Romance of *L'Homme aux Quarante Ecus* :—

“ M. Home, grand juge d'Ecosse, enseigne la manière de faire parler les héros d'une tragédie avec esprit; et voici un exemple remarquable qu'il rapporte de la tragédie de Henri IV. du divin Shakspeare. Le divin Shakspeare introduit Milord Falstaff, chef de justice, qui vient de prendre prisonnier le Chevalier Jean Colville, et qui le présente au roi :—“ Sire, le voilà, je vous le livre ;  
 “ je supplie votre grâce de faire enregistrer ce fait  
 “ d'armes parmi les autres de cette journée, ou  
 “ pardieu je le ferai mettre dans une balade avec  
 “ mon portrait à la tête; on verra Colville me  
 “ baisant les pieds. Voilà ce que je ferai, si vous  
 “ ne rendez pas ma gloire aussi brillante qu'une  
 “ pièce de deux sous dorée; et alors vous verrez,  
 “ dans le clair ciel de la renommée, ternir votre  
 “ splendeur comme la pleine lune efface les char-  
 “ bons éteints de l'élément de l'air, qui ne paraissent  
 “ autour d'elle que comme des têtes d'épingle.”—



notions, these paper bullets of the brain, neither have, nor ought to have, any power to awe us from the career of our delight in the drama of this heavenly-inspired bard. In every fine art there is an excellence that soars above the control of its ordinary laws. When the soul is captivated by beauties irreconcilable to the strict discipline of precept, Sensibility properly assumes the arbitra-

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“ C’est cet absurde et abominable galimatias, très-fréquent dans le divin Shakspeare, que M. Jean Home propose pour le modèle du bon goût et de l’esprit dans la tragédie.”

*Œuvres de Voltaire.* Edit. de Beaumarchais.  
tom. lvii. p. 230. 12mo. 1785.

*Elements of Criticism.* By the Hon. Henry Home of Kames. vol. i. p. 383. 8vo.  
8th Edit. 1807. Edinburgh.



tion between method and genius; and its decisions justify us in concluding that our admiration is rationally fixed. Truth of character and passion, the real touchstone and test of dramatic worth, is the unrivalled attribute of Shakspeare's muse; and, in the general estimation of mankind, this charm will probably maintain to him the highest place among the poets of the stage, as long as Human Nature shall hold on in its appointed course.\*

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\* Some sticklers for an undeviating adherence to the unities, have eagerly pressed the aid of David Hume into the maintenance of their league against Shakspeare; and refer us to the observations on the powers and compositions of our poet, which occur in his summary view of eminent men who flourished under the reign of King James I. These



An *Answer* to Mr. Whateley's *Remarks* was published immediately on their appearance. There the debate died away ; and no thought was

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critics might fairly be told, that their right to what they claim is not thoroughly clear: However,—let Mr. Hume's opinion have been what it might, when he wrote the History of the Stuarts; still, it is very certain, from one of his letters to the Comtesse de Boufflers, (dated Compeigne, July 14, 1769,) that he was, afterwards, a sound *Shakspearean*; and, consequently, the sentiments of these writers are no longer supported by the concurrence of so powerful a confederate. In answer to his fair correspondent's objections to the tragedy of Douglas, Mr. Hume says:—"The value of a theatrical piece can less be determined by an analysis of its conduct, than by the ascendant which it gains over the heart, and by the strokes of nature which are interspersed through it."—This is all that the most devoted admirers of Shakspeare contend for.

*Literary Gazette, and Journal of the Belles Lettres.* No. 8. 4to. 1817. London.



entertained of ever reviving it. Mr. Steevens, in his last edition of Shakspeare's plays, thought proper to awaken this dispute by some reflexions of his own, in support of Mr. Whateley's opinions. These reflexions have occasioned a revision of the *Answer* to the *Remarks*, and its republication in this Essay. Mr. Steevens, though confessedly a commentator of the first class, adds, it is true, no effectual strength to the cause which he undertakes to reinforce; he would, indeed, willingly second by sap and mine; but seldom cares to venture with his ally into the open field: nevertheless, it is worth while to repel him; because his ingenuity



has, sometimes, so exquisite a bias to insinuation against proof, and assumption without it, that, were it possible to think it exerted even for that only end, it could hardly serve better to bewilder the uninquisitive and careless. Except when Mr. Steevens calls for distinct notice by some new and explicit objection, it is meant that he is answered conjointly in the replies to Mr. Whateley. The advocate for what is estimable in Macbeth, depends with confidence on Shakespeare, to clear the "Fiend of Scotland" from the vilifying imputation laid on his nature by these gentlemen; and will beg leave here to say, once for all, that he does not renew this dis-



cussion from a spirit of controversy ; but from a wish to prevent the diffusion of unwholesome criticism, and out of regard for what he believes to be useful truth.

This Essay does not profess the offering of any observations on the conduct of the tragedy of Macbeth ; it concerns itself strictly with the sentiments of the hero of the play : in hopes, that this grandest of its author's works may be fixed stedfastly to its purpose of benefit to mankind, if, in analysing the characters of Macbeth and Richard, it be shown, that there is no room to suppose any degrading distinction between them in the quality of personal courage. If Macbeth



is really what Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens would have him pass for, we must forego our virtuous satisfaction in his repugnance to guilt, for it arises from mere cowardice; nor can we take any salutary warning from his remorse, for it is only the effect of imbecility. The stage will not conduce to our improvement, by presenting to us the example of a wretch who is uniformly the object of our contempt.

Having stated many instances of the difference which, no doubt, there is between the characters of Macbeth and Richard, Mr. Whateley speaks of the quality of their courage, and says:—



*“ In Richard it is intrepidity, and in Macbeth no more than resolution: in him (Macbeth) it proceeds from exertion, not from nature; in enterprise he betrays a degree of fear, though he is able, when occasion requires, to stifle and subdue it.”\**

The attempt to controvert this assertion, and those that are subsequently founded upon it, falls easily under three heads; namely, an exhibition of the character of Macbeth, as it stands in its simplicity, before any change is wrought in it by the supernatural soliciting of the Weird sisters; next, an examination into his conduct

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\* Remarks, p. 26.



towards Banquo and Macduff; and, lastly, a review of his general deportment, particularly as opposed to that of Richard in the *Remarks*. This order will lead to an inquiry into Mr. Whateley's interpretation of some passages of the poet's text; into the appositiveness of the facts which he adduces in support of his doctrine; and into his philosophy of the peculiar passion of each of these sanguinary usurpers, when, facts not supplying proof, he grounds himself only on the evidence of characteristic sentiment.

The appeal for judgement on the quality of the courage of Macbeth, does not depend, as questions of cri-



ticism often necessarily must, on conjecture and inference; it addresses itself directly to the plain meaning of every passage where Shakspeare touches on this subject. The shortness of the time allotted for the performance of a play, usually makes it impracticable to allow the principal personages space sufficient for their unfolding themselves gradually before the spectator; it is, therefore, a necessary and beautiful artifice with dramatic writers, by an impressive description of their heroes, to bring us in great measure acquainted with them, before they are visibly engaged in action on the stage; where, without this previous delineation, their



proceedings might often appear confused, and sometimes perhaps be unintelligible. We are bound, then, to look on the introductory portrait which our author has drawn of Macbeth, as the true resemblance of him; for the mind may not picture to itself a person of the poet's arbitrary invention, under any features, but those by which that invention has thought fit to identify him.—Here is the portrait.

*Serg.* The merciless Macdonwald

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* from the western isles

Of kernes and gallowglasses is supplied;  
And Fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,  
Show'd like a rebel's whore: But all's too  
weak;



For brave Macbeth, (well he deserves that  
name,)  
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,  
Which smok'd with bloody execution,  
Like Valour's minion,  
Carv'd out his passage, till he fac'd the slave;  
And ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to  
him,  
Till he unseam'd him from the \*nave to the  
chaps,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.†

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\* ——— *he unseam'd him from the nave to the  
chaps.*

Some of the annotators, persuaded that wounds cannot be given thus in an upward direction, substitute *nape* for *nave* in this passage, and say, that it means the decapitation of the disloyal chieftain. That wounds may, however, be thus inflicted, both judicially and in the chance of war, is clear on the

† Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 2.



Why does Shakspeare appoint Macbeth to the noble hazard of meeting the fierce Macdonwald in single

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authority of a very ancient, and of a very modern, writer. The divine Dante says :

“ Vedi come storpiato è Maometto :

Dinanzi a me sen'va piangendo Ali,

*Fesso nel volto dal mento al ciuffetto.*”—

*Inferno*, c. xxviii. v. 31.

Charles Ewart, sergeant in the Scots Greys,—Charles Ewart,—who, after three combats for his prize, bravely brought off a French eagle in the glorious battle won by the immortal Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, describes some of the circumstances of his action, in this extract from his letter dated *Rouen, June 18th, 1815*:—“ It was in the first charge I took the eagle from the enemy: he and I had a hard contest for it; he thrust for my groin; I parried it off, and cut him through the head; after which I was attacked by one of their lancers, who threw his lance at me, but missed the mark, by my throwing it off with my sword by my right side; then *I cut him from the chin up-*



opposition, hand to hand? Why does he call him brave, and emphatically insist on his deserving that name?

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*wards, which went through his teeth: next I was attacked by a foot-soldier," &c.*

*The Battle of Waterloo, containing the Series of Accounts published by Authority, British and Foreign, &c. By a Near Observer. 8vo. p. 27. 8th Edit. 1816. London.*

Not to dwell longer, where there ought to have been no occasion for stopping at all;—if these commentators had only figured to themselves the Caledonian warrior, burying his dirk in the bowels of Macdonwald and ripping up the body of the inhuman rebel, they would, perhaps, have seen that the old reading is extremely good sense; and not have had to answer for inveigling many very well-meaning publishers of Shakspeare into their party, by the artful expedient of telling them, that *to unseam an enemy*, is English for *chopping off his head*.



Why does he grace him with the title of Valour's minion; and presently,—styling him Bellona's bridegroom,—deem him worthy to be matched even with the Goddess of War? Could the poet thus labour the description of his hero, and not design to impress a full idea of the loftiness of his intrepidity? Macbeth's great heart pants to meet the barbarous leader of the rebels: his brandished steel, reeking with intermediate slaughter, has hewn out a passage to him; and he maintains the combat, till the death of his antagonist crowns his persevering valour with a glorious victory.

Macbeth, it is asserted in the *Remarks*, has *resolution*, not *intrepidity*.



What is the soldier's intrepidity, but a disdain of fortune? or, in less figurative words, what, but that perfect scorn of danger which Glamis so eminently displays, whenever fit occasions call him into it?

Further, it is objected, though with some restriction, that, in Macbeth, courage *proceeds from exertion, not from nature; and that in enterprise he betrays a degree of fear.*—Let us revert to Shakspeare.—

*Serg.* No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,  
Compell'd these skipping kernes to trust their  
heels,

But the Norweyan lord, surveying vantage,  
With furbish'd arms, and new supplies of men,  
Began a fresh assault.



*Dunc.* Dismay'd not this  
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

*Serg.* Yes ;  
As sparrows, eagles ; or the hare, the lion.\*

Here the Thane of Rosse arrives,  
post from the battle, and completes  
the fainting Sergeant's unfinished nar-  
rative:

Norway himself, with terrible numbers,  
Assisted by that most disloyal traitor  
The Thane of Cawdor, 'gan a dismal conflict;  
Till that Bellona's bridegroom,† lapp'd in  
proof,

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† “ ———— *Bellona's bridegroom.*”

“ This passage may be added to the many  
others, which show how little Shakspeare knew of  
ancient mythology.—HENLEY.”

\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 2.



Confronted him with self-comparisons,  
 Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm,  
 Curbing his lavish spirit: and to conclude,  
 The victory fell on us.\*

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Mr. Steevens coincides with Mr. Henley's remark, and accounts thus for Shakspeare's ignorance:—

“ Our author *might* have been influenced by Holinshed, who, p. 567, speaking of King Henry V. says:—*He declared that the goddess of battell, called Bellona, &c.*—Shakspeare, therefore, hastily concluded that the Goddess of War was wife to the God of it; or *might* have been misled by Chapman's version of a line in the 5th Iliad of Homer:—

—— *Mars himself, matched with his female mate,  
 The dread Bellona, &c.*—STEEVENS.”

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 26.

That Shakspeare *might* have been thus influenced, or misled, Mr. Steevens may please to say; but, fatally for this cautious conjecture, we

\* *Macbeth*, Act i. Sc. 2.



Is it, then, *to betray fear in enterprise*,—already worn with the toils, and

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find in the play of King Henry IV. that Shakspeare never once thought of calling Bellona the wife of Mars:—

“ *Ver.* The Earl of Westmoreland, seven thousand strong,

Is marching hitherwards; with him, Prince John.

*Hot.* No harm: what more?

*Ver.* And further, I have learn’d,—

The King himself in person is set forth,

Or hitherwards intended speedily,

With strong and mighty preparation.

*Hot.* He shall be welcome too. Where is his son,

The nimble-footed mad-cap Prince of Wales,

And his comrades, that daff’d the world aside,

And bid it pass?

*Ver.* All furnished, all in arms;

All plum’d like estridges, that with the wind

Bated, like eagles having lately bath’d;

Glittering in golden coats, like images;

As full of spirit, as the month of May,



weakened by the losses, of a hard-fought, well-won field,—to rush, at dis-

---

And gorgeous as the sun at midsummer.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Hot.* Let them come ;

They come like sacrifices in their trim ;

And to *the fire-ey'd Maid of smoky war*,

All hot, and bleeding, will we offer them :

The *mailed Mars* shall on his altar sit,

Up to his ears in blood."

*K. Henry IV. Part I. Act iv. Sc. 1.*

The *Maid of war*, thus by the impetuous Hotspur *mated* with *Mars*, totally removes the reproach conveyed in the commentator's misplaced apology for his author's ignorance :—

Further ;—granting that our poet did believe Bellona to be the wife of Mars; this opinion, so far from being a sign of his want of acquaintance with ancient mythology, would show him much better skilled in it, than the Master who corrects him. Is it possible, Mr. Steevens could be, really, so illiterate as not to know, that the Grecian and Roman poets call Bellona, indifferently,



advantage, on fresh and frightful numbers, with unconcern like that

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sometimes the wife of Mars, sometimes his mother, at others his sister, and even his nurse? The inconsistencies of the Theogony are endless. Shakspeare, probably, took Bellona, as the moderns usually do, for the sister of Mars:—

Lastly, and most to the point;—Mars is not alluded to in this passage at all: The Bridegroom here figuratively wedded to Bellona—(however ill this truth may accord with Mr. Steevens's purpose,)—can be no other person, but Macbeth. Though Rosse does not mention him by name; yet common sense, and metaphorical sense, and the, otherwise unintelligible, context of this scene with that which follows, all prove that he alone is meant in this bold expression: The poet, by hyperbole, calls Macbeth himself, *Bellona's Bridegroom*; as if he were, in fact, honoured with the union, of which Rosse, in his excessive admiration, paints him worthy. Mr. Henley and Mr. Steevens might just as reasonably suppose, that Duncan, who also omits the name of Macbeth, is



which eagles and lions might be conceived to show, if opposed to hares

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speaking of the prowess of Mars in these victories just gained on the shores of Fife, when, in reply to what he has heard in a side-speech, he begins:—

“ True, worthy Banquo, he is full so valiant;  
And in his commendations I am fed.”

Egregious the renown, and ample would be the triumph, of the tremendous son of Jove, if, lapped in the proof of his divine panoply, he had brandished his thundering falchion against the feeble temper of the Norweyan steel, and led an army to the overthrow of a merely mortal enemy!—Had Duncan been credulous enough to be persuaded, that the God of war had deigned to descend in person to his protection, his gratitude should have raised altars to Mars, instead of sending rewards to Macbeth.

If Mr. Steevens had discovered so cold, so unpoetical, so manifold an error in the Player-Editors, with what exultation would he not have rebuked their “ ignorance, dullness, stupidity,”



and sparrows? While Macbeth thus dedicates himself to the face of peril, does his behaviour indicate reluctance? Does it betray the result of effort and *exertion*? No; it is the impulse of a dauntless temper, that hurries the bridegroom of Bellona through the dismal conflict, again to confront the enemy, and hold him point to point, till his resistless arm has curbed the over-confident presumption of the royal invader of his country, and raised, on his discomfi-

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&c. &c. &c. On this, and other occasions, *Even-handed justice* might commend the ingredients of his poison'd chalice to his own lips:—But the asperities of his commentary shall not be retaliated here.



ture, the trophies of a second, and more brilliant, triumph.

The imagination being now fully prepared to receive him, Macbeth presents himself on the scene. A deputation from his sovereign meets him, with these gracious acknowledgements of his important services:—

*Rosse.* The King hath happily receiv'd,  
Macbeth,

The news of thy success : and, when he reads  
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,  
His wonders and his praises do contend,  
Which should be thine, or his : silenc'd with  
that,

In viewing o'er the rest of the self-same day,  
He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,



Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,  
 Strange images of death. As thick as tale,  
 Came post with post, and every one did bear  
 Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,  
 And pour'd them down before him.

*Ang.* We are sent,  
 To give thee, from our royal master, thanks ;  
 To herald thee into his sight, not pay thee.

*Rosse.* And, for an earnest of a greater honour,  
 He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of  
 Cawdor :

In which addition, Hail, most worthy Thane !  
 For it is thine.\*

The King congratulates Macbeth  
 on his success; and professes, that the  
 praises due to his personal valour in  
 the first battle with the rebels, are

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.



stifled in wonder at the excess of his daring. How unutterable, then, must Duncan's feelings be, when he finds him, the self-same day, not only again engaged, but, deep in the hostile ranks, fearlessly dealing death in every shape of horror among the squadrons that surrounded him! The King confers on his dauntless warrior the forfeited honours of the traitorous Cawdor, only as an earnest of those higher dignities which, on the applauding testimony of every tongue, his prosperous courage in the kingdom's wonderful defence has justly merited.

Such is the character with which Shakspeare arrays the son of Sinel,



while yet the pureness of his heart remains uncontaminated. The bold decision and unshaken persistence of Glamis throughout the stubborn struggles against Macdonwald and Sweno, establish his title to the praise of the sublimest heroism; the feats of his own hand assure to him the renown of hardihood; and the whole tenor of his deportment through the adventure of this perilous day, unequivocally displays a natural alacrity in the discharge of all the parts of a consummate soldier.

With these extracts from the play before his eyes, Mr. Steevens has ventured to say:—"Throughout such parts of this drama as afford oppor-



tunity for a display of personal bravery, Macbeth sometimes *screws his courage* to the sticking place, but *never* rises into constitutional heroism."

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 296.

Had not Mr. Steevens, here and there, prudently provided himself with an escape from the full reproach of this surprizing proposition, it would have been unworthy of serious notice: The evident drift, however, of his dissertation on the character of Macbeth being, to leave his readers in a complete conviction of the truth of all the material part of Mr. Whateley's theory, the best way of refuting him, it was thought, was, at once, to root up the foundation of his system,



without spending any time on the guarded intricacy of his arguments.\*

The question on the intrepidity of Macbeth's nature, might very safely be left for decision to the proofs of it already stated; but it would be an injustice to the poet, drily to dismiss this part of the debate, without some

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\* It will be fair, to let Mr. Steevens explain himself. These are his words:—"The late Mr. Whateley's *Remarks on some of the Characters of Shakspeare*, have shown, with the utmost clearness of distinction and felicity of arrangement, that *what in Richard III. is fortitude, in Macbeth is no more than resolution*. But this judicious critic having imputed the cause of *Macbeth's inferiority in courage* to his natural disposition, induces me to dissent, *in one particular*, from an Essay, which otherwise is too comprehensive to need a supplement, and *too rational to admit of confutation*."

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 296.



notice of the stroke of refined skill, by which he, as it were, irradiates the portrait of his hero. How slightly is Banquo alluded to throughout the relation of the momentous events in which he was so importantly employed! It was necessary to the future interest of the piece, that we should conceive of him, as of a person of high rank and fearless courage; and, being so far known, he is for the present withdrawn from deeper attention.

*Dunc.* Dismay'd not this  
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

*Serg.* Yes;  
As sparrows, eagles ; or the hare, the lion.\*

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 2.



He is equal partner with the son of Sinel in command; yet Rosse and Angus bear him no greeting from a master overflowing in the plenty of his joys; they are commissioned with the royal thanks and favours to Glamis only. When the victorious Captains are heralded into the monarch's presence, the gracious Duncan bursts into an enthusiastic encomium of the deserts of Cawdor, while he welcomes Banquo, not with actual accumulation of dignifying rewards, but in a brief phrase of courtly compliment; then hastens to distinguish Cawdor by the further honour of a domestic visit; and, when the favoured Thane has taken leave of him, is occupied



solely in listening to, and in confirming, Banquo's generous panegyric of his absent partner. And what is the topic of this praise? On what account does Banquo, the witness and companion of his dangers, extoll Macbeth so highly?—Will it be believed, after what Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens have asserted?—Why, precisely for his being pre-eminently endowed with that very courage, which they have the temerity to deny him:—

*Dunc.* True, worthy Banquo; he is full so  
valiant,

And in his commendations I am fed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, 'tis a peerless kinsman !\*

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 4.



It is difficult, to conceive how Mr. Steevens could miss the import of all these lucid passages, and need to have it hinted to him, that Shakspeare, by passing lightly over Banquo's merits, and insisting, so repeatedly, on this particular quality of splendid intrepidity in the character of Macbeth, renders him the object of our undivided admiration; and thus provides, that the attention shall never, for a moment, wander from the leading figure of this divine tragedy.

We come now to the second division of this inquiry, and are to review the conduct of Macbeth towards Banquo and Macduff.

The *Remarks* affirm, that *Macbeth*



*is afraid of Banquo, and that his fear is founded on the superior courage of the other.\**

Whence is the evidence of Macbeth's cowardice to be brought? Certainly, not from his behaviour at the head of an army: his title to the honour of heroism in the field, is already fully established. To all Mr. Whateley's proofs of this unjust assertion, the plain and comprehensive answer is, that they all rest on a palpable misunderstanding of the author's meaning. It does not appear that, *upon the first meeting with the Witches, Macbeth is agitated much more than Banquo*:† nor are Banquo's

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\* Remarks, p. 40.

† Ib. p. 46.



*several particular and pertinent questions*\*—(which, it should be noted, amount to no more than two, before Macbeth joins in the interrogation,)—*expressive of mere curiosity*:† on the contrary, they are thoroughly expressive of the great surprise with which both he and his partner are equally struck, on their first encountering three objects of so grotesque and haggard an appearance.

*Banq.* What are these,  
So wither'd, and so wild in their attire,—  
That look not like the inhabitants of the earth,  
And yet are on't!—Live you? or are you aught  
That man may question?‡

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\* Remarks, p. 46.

‡ Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.

† Ib.



Is this the language of *mere curiosity*?  
—If Macbeth *only repeats the same inquiry shortly*,\*—

Speak, if you can ; what are you?†—

it is, clearly, not from *agitation*;‡ for hitherto, at least, nothing has occurred to *alarm*§ him: No; he makes the same demand,—(and makes it peremptorily; not, as Mr. Whateley implies, fearfully;)—because he is naturally desirous of the same information; and, if he expresses himself *shortly*, Shakspeare intentionally orders that he should do so; the more

\* Remarks, p. 47.

† Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.

‡ Ib. p. 46.

§ Ib. p. 46.



forcibly to mark his impatience for an answer.

Why should the speeches of the two Generals, in this scene, *appear to be injudiciously distributed?*\* and how will *the difference in their characters account for such a disposition?*†—*Banquo speaks to the witches first:*‡ Very true; and it is admirably contrived, that he shall see them first; not, as the author of the *Remarks* unadvisedly supposes, in token of his superior presence of mind; but, most assuredly, because the poet, profoundly a master in his art, is solicitous, by their ceremonious silence to Banquo,—

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\* Remarks, p. 47.

† Ib.

‡ Ib.



—— each, at once, her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips,\*

to heighten the solemnity of that

—— prophetic greeting,†

with which they are about to hail  
Macbeth. The remainder of the scene  
evinces, beyond the possibility of  
cavil, that *this distribution of the  
speeches* is not adopted for the purpose  
of showing Banquo's superiority, in  
*being perfectly calm*‡ under an occur-  
rence that had disturbed Macbeth; for,  
if Macbeth—(and very naturally,)—*is  
amazed when he sees the Witches are  
vanished*,§ and likens them, in their

\* Macbeth, Act. i. Sc. 3.

† Ib.

‡ Remarks, p. 47.

§ Ib. p. 48.



disappearance, to the melting of breath into the element; still, Banquo—this carelessly-curious Banquo!—is not less moved. The utterance of his wonder at their strange evanescence, is dictated by a most striking thought; he resembles them to fancied bubbles of the earth, insubstantial as those that float on the surface of the water:—

The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,  
And these are of them! Whither are they  
vanish'd?\*

To which strong expressions of astonishment Macbeth replies:—

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\* Macbeth, Act. i. Sc. 3.



Into the air; and what seem'd corporal, melted  
As breath into the wind. 'Would they had  
stay'd !\*

Here, it must be allowed, Macbeth  
is not so far *troubled by their promise,*  
*and at their appearance,*† but that,  
like Brutus,—who has never been  
called a coward,—he

———— would hold more talk‡

with these apparitions.

It cannot, on any tenable pretence,  
be said that *Banquo treats the Witches*  
*with contempt:*§ he solemnly adjures  
them by the name of Truth; and,

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.

† Remarks, p. 49.

‡ J. Cæsar, Act iv. Sc. 3.

§ Ib. p. 47.



with Macbeth, gives them, in some sort, credit for more than mortal knowledge, when he thus addresses them :—

————— In the name of Truth,  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*  
If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say, which grain will grow, and which  
will not;  
Speak then to me, who neither beg, nor fear,  
Your favours, nor your hate.\*

If you can look into futurity, Banquo says, reveal my destiny: I neither solicit your favour, nor dread your

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.



enmity; but am prepared to hear with firmness what is to betide me, be it for good, or ill. This is the noble image of manly fortitude, with not a feature ruffled by the vulgarizing sneer of *Contempt*.

Macbeth, having recapitulated the predictions of the Witches, asks whether “they went,” or not, as he had repeated them: Banquo, when he assents to the preciseness of the recital, and makes this answer,—

To the self-same tune and words,\*—  
is far from intending any *ridicule of their prophecy*:† it is an exact and

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 2.

† Remarks, p. 48.



weighed reply to an earnest and very interesting demand.

In the fourth act of this play, when Macduff, on fire to revenge the slaughter of his wife and children, bursts into the following energetic appeal to divine justice:—

———— Gentle Heaven,  
Cut short all intermission ; front to front  
Bring thou this Fiend of Scotland, and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him ; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too !\*

Malcolm, keenly sympathising with his suffering and loyal friend, and earnest to fortify him under the

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\* Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 3.



mighty weight of his calamity, cries out:—

———— This tune goes manly !\*

This passage, in which Malcolm terms the effusions of Macduff's grief and rage “ a manly tune,” sufficiently confirms the serious import of Banquo's reply to Macbeth in the scene under our immediate consideration.†

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† It were superfluous here to accumulate instances of the grave employment to which our elder poets put the word *Tune*. They who are desirous to have all the information to be gained on Shakspeare's use of this word, or of any other to be found in his dramatic works, should, as a preliminary step, have recourse to Mr. Twiss's correct and invaluable *Complete Verbal Index to the Plays of Shakspeare, adapted to all the Editions.* 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1805.

\* Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 3.



Banquo's exclamation, on seeing a part of the high fortune foretold to Glamis so soon accomplished,—

—— What, can the devil speak true!\*—  
is so far from being dictated by *dis-  
regard*,†—(How is it possible, it should  
be so?)—that it is an ejaculation of  
the utmost wonder; for, when Mac-  
beth takes occasion, from that very  
event, to sound him on the hope that  
his children would be elevated to  
the throne of Scotland,—a hope he  
now might reasonably entertain,—he  
awfully replies:—

——— 'Tis strange!  
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.

† Remarks, p. 48.



The instruments of darkness tell us truths;  
 Win us with honest trifles to betray us  
 In deepest consequence.\*—

This just and beautiful reflexion on the incautious entertainment of emotions which, though innocent in themselves, yet by their nature lead inevitably to guilty consequences, was never intended by Shakspeare for the flippant tongue of *disregard*.

Let us now attend to the predominating and painful effect which the truths told by these Instruments of darkness produce on the mind of Banquo: by day, his imagination is haunted with the recurrence of their

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.



promises ; by night, his dreams suggest the wicked means of realising them ; he prays devoutly to Heaven, to be delivered from the bad temptations that assail him in his slumbers ;

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me ;  
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers !  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts, that nature  
Gives way to in repose !\*—

and yet, the moment this prayer has passed his lips, on meeting the newly-created Thane of Cawdor, the prophecy of the Witches again takes complete possession of his brain :—

I dream'd last night of the three Weird Sisters :  
To you they have show'd some truth.†—

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\* Macbeth, Act ii. Sc. 1.

† Ib.



His ruling thoughts at once discover themselves; and, through all the struggles of his conscience, he still betrays the ambitious hope, that these mysterious Hags will prove oracles of verity to him, as their speeches have already shone so prosperously, and so quickly, on Macbeth. Never could these discordant and horrible emotions have been excited in the virtuous mind of Banquo by declarations, which he had, as Mr. Whateley avers, *contemned, ridiculed, and disregarded.*

To conclude:—A play is written on some event, for the purpose of being acted; and plays are so inseparable from the notion of action,



that, in reading them, our Reflexion, necessarily bodying forth the carriage which it conceives the various characters would sustain on the stage, becomes its own theatre, and gratifies itself with an ideal representation of the piece: This operation of the mind demonstrates that Mr. Whateley has, in this place, once more misconstrued Shakspeare; for there is no risk in saying, that the eye of a spectator would turn, offended, from the affront offered to credibility, by the impassive levity of manner set down for Banquo in the *Remarks*.

The encounter, therefore, with the Weird Sisters on the heath does not, in the most remote degree, counte-



nance Mr. Whateley in asserting, that it proves *the personal courage of Banquo to be superior to that of Macbeth*. In truth, the scene has no relation whatever to the personal courage of either of them.

The *Remarks* proceed, still speaking of Macbeth's personal fear of Banquo:—*His principal object is the death of the father, and the securing of his crown against Banquo's issue, who alone were pointed out to his jealousy by the Witches, is no more than a secondary consideration.\**

Macbeth, when he confides to the Queen the cause of his lonely musings,

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\* *Remarks*, p. 42.



acquaints us at the same time that Banquo is not alone the origin of his uneasiness, but that his anguish has as deep a spring in Fleance:—

*Lady M.* How now, my lord? why do you  
keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making?

\* \* \* \* \*

*Macb.* We have scotch'd the snake, not  
kill'd it;

She'll close, and be herself; whilst our poor  
malice

Remains in danger of her former tooth.

\* \* \* \* \*

O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!

Thou know'st, that Banquo, and his Fleance,  
lives!\*

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 2.



Thus it appears, that Fleance is not a subordinate, but an equal, object of the King's jealousy.

The perfidious tyrant, with his directions for ridding himself of Banquo, gives the assassins a special charge to make an end of Fleance also:—

———— With him,  
(To leave no rubs, nor botches in the work,) Fleance, his son, that keeps him company,  
Whose absence is no less material to me Than is his father's, must embrace the fate  
Of that dark hour.\*

Here again it is proved, if words bear any intelligible meaning, that

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 1.



Fleance acts a principal, not a secondary, part in Macbeth's consideration.

To reign,—not precariously, and in the daily hazard of the worst that treason can do; to reign, secure from all the efforts of domestic malice and foreign invasion; thus to enjoy his ill-acquired sovereignty, is the aim of the usurper's crimes; the sole care that, at present, agitates and distracts him:—

————— To be thus, is nothing;  
all his anxiety is,  
————— to be safely thus.\*

How soon the promise made to Ban-

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 1.



quo's issue may be fulfilled, he knows not; he is condemned to live in the apprehension of its hourly accomplishment:—

Thou shalt get Kings, though thou be none.\*

This is the worm that gnaws his heart; this is the “Hag that rides his dreams;” this is the fiend that binds his soul on the rack of restless ecstasy; and this the only fear that makes his firm nerve tremble, and urges him on to the perpetration of crimes abhorrent from his nature.

However the case may stand as to Banquo, it cannot be denied that Macbeth meditates the death of Fleance

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 3.



on motives unmixed with cowardice ;  
 for, allowing, for one moment, that  
 he personally feared the father, it is  
 absolutely impossible that he could  
 have any *personal* fear of the son,  
 who had not yet passed the term of  
 boyhood:—

*Banq.* How goes the night, boy?

*Fle.* The moon is down : I have not heard  
 the clock.\*

Fleance, therefore, as far as Mac-  
 beth's personal courage is concerned,  
 is to be laid entirely out of our regard.

Now, with respect to Banquo,  
 who, according to Mr. Whateley, was  
 the only efficient cause of Macbeth's

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\* Macbeth, Act ii. Sc. 1.



fears,—had these fears been *personal*, it is obvious that they must of necessity have totally subsided with the death of the man, who, as the *Remarks* again and again maintain, was the sole object of them: the very reverse, however, is the fact:—

*Macb.* There's blood upon thy face.

*Mur.* 'Tis Banquo's then.

*Macb.* Is he dispatch'd?

*Mur.* My lord, his throat is cut; that I did  
for him.\*

The assurance which Macbeth receives that Banquo is dispatched, gives but a momentary respite to the

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 4.



pangs of his torn bosom; for, finding  
that Fleance has not met the same  
untimely fate, and that Banquo might  
still prove

———— the root and father  
Of many Kings,\*—

we see him instantly replunged into  
all the agony of his former terrors:—

*Mur.* Most royal Sir, Fleance is 'scap'd.

*Macb.* Then comes my fit again: I'd else  
been perfect;

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock;  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now, I'm cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound  
in,  
To saucy doubts and fears.\*

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 1.

† Ib. Act iii. Sc. 4.



The *Remarks* now argue that *the anxiety which prompts Macbeth to the destruction of Banquo, arises entirely from apprehension;\** (still meaning, from *personal fear*;) and they endeavour to make good this assertion by observing, as quoted above, that *the securing of his crown against Banquo's issue, who were alone pointed out to his jealousy by the Witches, is no more than a secondary consideration with him.*

Is then this desire *to secure his crown against Banquo's issue*, alleged as a proof that Banquo falls a sacrifice to Macbeth's *personal fear*, and

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\* *Remarks*, p. 39.



not to his jealous ambition? It proves exactly the contrary. Fleance, we are to believe, is Banquo's sole heir. Let us suppose Fleance dead, and Banquo consequently left childless. Where is the tyrant's security? Banquo's expectations are not necessarily buried in this infant's grave: Actual does not include possible progeny; the loss of one son does not forbid the being blessed with others. Banquo would still survive, to fulfil his destiny in propagating a race of kings; and might still disappoint all the usurper's ambitious cares for the continuance of the sceptre to his own family. Macbeth would have been fool as well as villain, his work would have



been still to do, had he not comprehended son and father, both, in his bloody purpose. Thus, *the securing of the crown against Banquo's issue*, is so far from being a *secondary*, that it is, indeed, the only instigation to this double murder. Banquo might have lived the lease of nature, if the Sisters had never revealed the scheme of his nativity.

That Macbeth felt *a personal fear of Banquo on account of his superior courage*,\* is an opinion founded, perhaps, on an erroneous conception of Shakspeare's meaning in the following lines:—

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\* Remarks, p. 40.



———— Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep ;—  
and

———— There is none, but he,  
Whose being I do fear.

In order that no shadow of doubt may rest on the quality of the fears mentioned in these passages, it will be proper to trace the course of reasoning pursued through the context of the soliloquy from which they are taken.

*Macb.* To be thus, is nothing;  
But to be safely thus :—Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep ; and in his royalty of nature  
Reigns that, which would be fear'd : 'Tis much  
he dares :  
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,



He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
 To act in safety. There is none, but he,  
 Whose being I do fear : and, under him,  
 My Genius is rebuk'd ; as, it is said,  
 Mark Antony's was by Cæsar.\* He chid the  
                   Sisters,  
 When first they put the name of King upon me,  
 And bade them speak to him ; then, prophet-  
                   like,

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\* “ ——— under him,  
 My Genius is rebuked ; as, it is said,  
 Mark Antony's was by Cæsar.”

This comparison of Banquo and himself to Octavius Cæsar and Mark Antony, is very just ; and of importance to the present question, as it elucidates the sense in which Macbeth always uses the word *Fear*, with reference to Banquo. Shakspeare found the circumstances here alluded to, in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's Lives:—“ With Antonius there was a Soothsayer or Astronomer of Ægypt, that could cast a figure,



They hailed him father to a line of kings :  
 Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,  
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,

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and judge of men's nativities, to tell them what should happen to them. He, either to please Cleopatra, or else for that he found it so by his art, told Antonius plainly, that his fortune (which of itself was excellent and very great) was altogether blemished and obscured by Cæsar's fortune: and therefore he counselled him utterly to leave his company, and to get him as farre from him as he could. For thy Demon, said he, (that is to say, the good Angell and Spirit that keepeth thee,) is afraied of his: and being coragious and high when he is alone, becometh fearful and timerous when he cometh neare unto the other. Howsoever it was, the events ensuing proved the Ægyptian's words true; for it is said, that as often as they two drew cuts, for pastime, who should have any thing; (or) whether they played at dice; Antonius always lost. Oftentimes when they were disposed to see Cock-fight, or Quails that were taught to fight with one another, Cæsar's Cocks or Quails



Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
 No son of mine succeeding. If it be so,  
 For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;

---

did ever overcome. The which spighted Antonius in his mind, although he made no outward shew of it; and therefore he believed the Ægyptian the better," &c. &c.

*Plutarch's Lives.—Life of Marcus Antonius.—By  
 Sir Thomas North. Folio 1676. Cambridge.*

Antony's Demon, or Genius, dares not oppose himself to Cæsar's; that is to say, Cæsar, according to the Astronomer's calculation, is born to the happier fortune. The Soothsayer's words are confirmed by various trifling occurrences; and, among others, that of always losing at every game with Cæsar, puts Antony out of humour: he dissembles his mortification; but, giving credit to the Astrologer, withdraws himself from the society of Octavius. Here is abundant cause for saying that Antony could not brook Cæsar's having the advantage of him even in their sports; but none at all for supposing that Antony conceived a *personal fear* of him on account of his good luck,



For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel

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Antony twice defied Cæsar to single combat; and Cæsar, on very good considerations, no doubt, as often declined these challenges. Shakspeare found this circumstance of the life of the Triumvir, with that but now quoted, in Sir Thomas North; and, therefore, could not believe that Antony was *personally afraid* of Cæsar.

Antony, in his letters, charged Octavius with disgraceful flight in the first battle of Mutina:—"Antonius eum (Cæsarem scil.) fugisse scribit; ac, *sine paludamento equoque*, post biduum demum apparuisse."—*Suet. Oct. Cæs. cap. x.*—Whether Shakspeare knew this anecdote, or not, cannot now be ascertained: it is very possible that he might; for Holland's translation of Suetonius appeared in 1606; and to the month of August, in this year, Mr. Malone proposes to fix the production of *Macbeth*; though there is ground for thinking that this play is not of so early a date: However, giving the play and the translation to the same year, we



Given to the common enemy of man,  
 To make them kings. The seed of Banquo  
 kings!

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may still, like staunch commentators, insist, that it is most likely the translation was published much earlier in the year than Macbeth;—and, surely, that our author *might* thus have read Holland's work, could, of all persons, with least grace be denied by Mr. Steevens, who has laboriously diffused Shakspeare's thirty-six plays through one-and-twenty volumes, to no other purpose, apparently, but that of proving him acquainted with (it would, certainly, be exaggeration, to say) every English book that had passed the press down to his time.

As a profound statesman, Octavius is celebrated by all the Historians who write of him; they are not so unanimous on the subject of his military prowess; on which, indeed, some of them have not hesitated to cast a slur of doubt. The lover of Cleopatra sunk before the fortune of his more prudent competitor for empire; but, in the most triumphant time of Cæsar's prosperity, neither calumny nor flattery was ever base or broad enough,



Rather than so,—Come, fate, into the list,  
And champion me to the utterance.\*

In this soliloquy, Macbeth considers that, after all the guilt he has waded through in order to ascend the throne, he is still in the perpetual danger of being hurled from it; he weighs the causes of that danger;

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to impeach the personal intrepidity of the Second in command to Julius in the battle of Pharsalia, and the generous Conqueror of the Republic on the plains of Philippi,—

“Cum fracta *virtus*, et *minaces*

Turpe solum tetigère mento.”

Antony feared Octavius as a political, not as a *personal* enemy; and this is exactly the light in which Macbeth regards Banquo,—as a rival for the sovereignty.

\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 1.



and determines by the removal of the persons who seem appointed to depose him, to take the only certain means of assuring the crown to himself, and his posterity. I have, he says, possessed myself of the supreme power: But to what avail, since, in an instant, it may be wrested from me? Banquo is impatient to be the father of a king; and there reigns in his very nature a royalty that seems to realize his expectations: He is not only a soldier of undaunted enterprise, but so consummate a politician, that, should he conspire against me, he will infallibly carry his designs successfully into execution. There lives no other man,



whose attempts I fear; but his good genius holds as high an ascendant over mine, as, it is said, Cæsar's did over that of Mark Antony. Nor are his pretensions to be apprehended only on account of his natural endowments; they are emboldened too by the assurances of prophecy: Hearing me saluted King by the Weird Sisters, he bade them speak to him; they obeyed; and hailed him—Father to a line of Kings. Upon my head they placed a crown, and put a sceptre in my hand, not to be transmitted to my own blood, but to be torn away by the unlineal succession of his children. If so, I have committed crimes that must embitter



every moment of my life here, and condemn me to never-ending torments hereafter, only to raise the descendants of Banquo to the throne.—Never.—I here oppose myself to the prediction; and resolve, through whatever dangers I must run, by the extirpation of the whole race to baffle the decrees of destiny itself.

Macbeth, then, does not plunge into fresh crimes, in order *to get rid of* (personal) *fear*: \* Ambition impelled him to the murder of Duncan; and ambition still,—and no other motive,—urges him to the destruction of Banquo and Fleance; because

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\* Remarks, p. 39.



they threaten to reduce him and his lineage from the splendours of monarchy to the obscurity of vassalage.

A moment's attention must now be bestowed on Macbeth's conduct towards Macduff; in which the *Remarks* find additional proofs of his cowardice:—*The same motives of personal fear, and those unmixed with any other, impel him to seek the destruction of Macduff.\**

Macbeth is not wrought by *personal* fear to destroy Macduff: it is from conviction of the Thane's indisposition to his government, that he wishes to have him within his grasp:—

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\* *Remarks*, p. 42.



*Macb.* How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
At our great bidding?\*

The discontented Thane of Fife is an enemy, whose parts and popularity are not to be despised by a master, so newly and so foully seated on the throne: He is most honourably distinguished as

———— noble, wise, judicious;†

and Rosse, speaking of the misfortune that had befallen him in the loss of his wife and family, says:—

———— No mind that's honest  
But in it shares some woe.‡

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 4.

† Ib. Act iv. Sc. 2.

‡ Ib. Act iv. Sc. 3.



The *Remarks* might with equal probability argue, that Macbeth is *personally* afraid of every Thane in Scotland; because he sets spies in all their houses, to acquaint him with their political opinions and conduct.

Convinced of the disaffection of Macduff, and bent upon knowing, by whatever means, the worst that impends both from him and Fleance, Macbeth determines on an immediate interview with the Witches: he remorselessly resolves, that none who may endanger his secure enjoyment of the throne, shall any longer give him disquiet; he finds, too late, that he has ventured for the crown into the midst of a sea of blood, and de-



termines, that the only course now left him, is to wade resolutely through it.

*Macb.* I will to-morrow,  
 Betimes I will, unto the Weird Sisters :  
 More shall they speak ; for now I am bent to  
     know,  
 By the worst means, the worst : for mine own  
     good,  
 All causes shall give way ; I am in blood  
 Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,  
 Returning were as tedious as go o'er.\*

Through the whole scene in the Pit of Acheron, Macbeth's language to the Weird Sisters and the Apparitions, is that of confidence and ex-

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. iv.



ultation: Presently, indeed, his whole soul is inflamed with mad rage, on beholding the royal succession of Banquo's line; and that rage is further exasperated into frightful vengeance, on learning that the wary Macduff has placed himself, by flight, beyond the reach of the murderous power, to which, not a moment ago, he had doomed him an assured victim.

If Macbeth thinks himself served by *the Apparition who warns him to beware of the Thane of Fife*:\*—

*Macb.* Whate'er thou art, for thy good  
caution thanks;

Thou'st harp'd my fear aright:†—

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\* Remarks, p. 42.

† Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 1.



it is, because, the caution justifying his apprehensions, he shall now provide more strenuously against the machinations of his enemy.

*If, when told by another apparition that he shall be harmed by\**

None of woman born,†

he says,

Then live, Macduff: What need I fear of thee?‡—

and yet, repressing these feelings of confidence, *immediately reverts to his former resolution,*§ and adds,

\* Remarks, p. 42.

§ Ib.

† Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 1.

‡ Ib.



'Thou shalt not live ;  
That I may tell pale-hearted fear, it lies ;  
And sleep in spite of thunder ;\*—

the quality of his fear is decided by  
the kingly style he uses, when,—being  
assured that he

Shall never vanquish'd be, until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him,†—

elate, and triumphing in the stability  
of his reign, he exclaims,

That will never be.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Rebellious head*, rise never, till the wood  
Of Birnam rise, and our *high-plac'd Macbeth*  
Shall live the lease of nature, &c.‡

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\* Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 1.

† Ib.

‡ Ib.



When Macbeth and the Thane of Fife encounter each other in battle, the tyrant does not resort to that power over his life with which he believed himself gifted, as, in the true spirit of a coward, he instantly would have done, had he *personally* feared him; but, yielding to a noble compunction for the inhuman wrongs he has done him, is desirous to avoid the necessity of adding the blood of Macduff himself to that already spilled in the slaughter of his dearest connexions:—

*Macb.* Of all men else, I have avoided thee:  
But get thee back; my soul is too much  
charg'd

With blood of thine already.



*Macd.* I've no words,  
My voice is in my sword: Thou bloodier  
villain

Than terms can give thee out! (*They fight.*)

*Macb.* Thou lovest labour:  
As easy may'st thou the intrenchant air  
With thy keen sword impress, as make me  
bleed:

Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;  
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield  
To one of woman born.\*

Unmoved by Macduff's taunts and determined assault, Macbeth counsels him to employ his valour where success may attend on it; and generously warns him not to persist in urging an unequal contest with a foe, whom

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 7.



Destiny has pronounced invincible. Here is demonstration that, in the scene with the Witches, Macbeth does not from *personal* fear *revert to his former resolution* against the life of Macduff.

In a word, Macbeth does not determine on the death of Banquo, Fleance, and Macduff, from *personal* fear: he conceives the perpetration of these crimes, evidently because his ambition renders the father and son objects of his envy, and the disobedient Thane, of his hatred.

We come now to consider Macbeth and King Richard the Third, as they are immediately opposed to each other in the *Remarks*; and are to



answer the arguments employed to prove, that *Richard is superior to Macbeth in personal courage*. Equal, not to say superior, firmness under equal trials, will refute some of them ; some will be invalidated by showing that the carriage objected to in Macbeth, as a proof of timidity, is precisely the same as that of Richard in like circumstances ; and some, it will be made appear, rest altogether on careless mistatement of fact, or mere misapprehension of sentiment.

Because Macbeth is not more pusillanimous than Richard, it will not, it may be said, conclusively follow, that he is a brave man : This is true : But this could not be objected



by Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens, who make Richard, in all his actions, their uniform standard of inborn, perfect, never-wavering Intrepidity.

If it be a mark of *resolute behaviour*\* in Richard, that, when Tyrrel informs him the Princes are dispatched, *he is curious to inquire into the particulars of the proceeding; and, though certain of the event, is solicitous to hear at leisure in what manner it was conducted;†—*

*K. Rich.* Kind Tyrrel! am I happy in thy  
news?

*Tyr.* If to have done the thing you gave in  
charge

---

\* Remarks, p. 38.

† Ib.



Beget your happiness, be happy then,  
For it is done.

*K. Rich.* But didst thou see them dead?

*Tyr.* I did, my lord.

*K. Rich.* And buried, gentle Tyrrel?

*Tyr.* The chaplain of the Tower hath buried  
them;

But where, to say the truth, I do not know.

*K. Rich.* Come to me, Tyrrel, soon at after  
supper,

When thou shalt tell the process of their  
death :\*—

if this desire to hear Tyrrel again, be  
a mark of resolute behaviour in  
Richard, it must, of consequence, be  
allowed, that Macbeth too displays  
resolution of spirit; for he, in like

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\* K. Richard, Act iv. Sc. 3.



manner, refers the Ruffian, who has informed him of the death of Banquo, to a second audience:

————— Get thee gone ; To-morrow  
We'll hear ourselves again.\*

It is thought right to make this reply to the author of the *Remarks*; though, in truth, he again much mistakes the poet's intention, when he supposes, it is for the sake of indulging a leisurely curiosity, that Richard orders the stony-hearted wretch to attend, and give him a more minute account of the particulars and manner of the death of his nephews. The whole passage—*Is*

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 4.



*it done?—are they dead?—are they buried?*—forcibly expresses the tyrant's fear lest the bloody work may have been left incomplete: He is far from finding himself at ease on Tyrrel's first relation of the event; and his solicitude to hear the process of the murder retold, only discovers the anxiety with which he labours, till he shall have put the irrevocable deed past doubt. By the immutable law of nature, this painful state of mind inevitably waits on the entrusting of dangerous crimes to the execution of mercenary agents; and, in the instances before us, similar guilt produces similar torture in the soul of both the distrustful usurpers.



The *Remarks* proceed :—*Macbeth's* suspicions, the consequence of his apprehensions, extend to all his great lords,\*

*Macb.* There's not a one of them, but in  
his house

I keep a servant fee'd ;†—

and he says to his *Physician*,‡

Doctor, the Thanes fly from me :§—

Tis true ; he does : And does not Richard betray the very same suspicion, when he dares not trust Lord Stanley into the north, to raise his friends and tenants, till he has first

\* *Remarks*, p. 45.

† *Macbeth*, Act iii. Sc. 4.

‡ *Ib.* p. 71.

§ *Ib.* Act v. Sc. 3.



taken that nobleman's eldest son as a surety for his fidelity?—

*K. Rich.* Go, muster men : But, hear you,  
leave behind

Your son, George Stanley : Look your heart  
be firm,

Or else his head's assurance is but frail :\*—

And further,—is not Richard much more alarmed by a mere distrust of his officers, than Macbeth is, on seeing himself really deserted ?

*K. Rich.* What thinkest thou? Will our  
friends prove all true?

*Rat.* No doubt, my lord.

*K. Rich.* Ratcliff, I fear, I fear.—

\* \* \* \* \*

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\* K. Richard, Act iv. Sc. 4.



Come, go with me;  
 Under our tents I'll play the eaves-dropper,  
 To hear, if any mean to shrink from me.\*

Macbeth, on the contrary, when reports are brought him of the defection of his nobles, treats their revolt with unconcern; and, steady to his temper, and relying on the promises of the Witches,—(in spite of which, Mr. Steevens and the *Remarks* will have it, that he is trembling with terror,)—disdainfully exclaims:—

————— Let them fly all:  
 Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,  
 I cannot taint with fear.†

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\* K. Richard, Act v. Sc. 3.      † Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 3.



In reading dramatic poetry, we are apt to resign ourselves to the emotion which the general idea of the passion of the speaker excites, without pausing scrupulously to weigh each word of the phrase in which his sentiment is expressed. This heedless habit is so common, and so natural, that it merits but gentle blame, except in a commentator; who is not to be excused, when his inattention is the cause of his misconstruing an author's meaning.

Mr. Steevens says:—"One of Shakspeare's favourite morals is, that criminality reduces the brave and pusillanimous to a level."—(Mr. Steevens, probably, meant to say, that crimi-



nality reduces the brave to a level with the pusillanimous.)—" *Every puny whipster gets my sword, exclaims Othello, for why should honour outlive honesty?—Where I could not be honest, says Albany, I was never valiant.—Jachimo imputes his want of manhood to the heaviness and guilt within his bosom.—Hamlet asserts that conscience does make cowards of us all; and Imogen tells Pisanio, he may be valiant in a better cause, but now he seems a coward.*"

*Shakspeare, vol. x. p. 297.*

Is there, among these instances, one that approaches to any thing like a parallel with Macbeth? The sophistry of such perverse trifling with a reader's



time and patience, completely exposes itself in the example of Jachimo; who is, indeed, most unwarily introduced on this occasion. Mr. Steevens, for some cause or other, seems determined to be blind on this side; otherwise, he must have seen, if consciousness of guilt be, as he says, the measure of pusillanimity, that, by his own rule, Jachimo should have been the victor in his combat with Posthumus; for he ought to have been braver than his adversary,—in the same proportion, as a vain mischievous liar is still less atrociously a wretch than an ungrateful murderer. Mr. Steevens concludes:—"Who then can suppose that Shakspeare would have exhi-



bited his Macbeth with increasing guilt, but undiminished bravery?"

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 297.

The only answer to this dogmatical question is,—Every body;—that is, every body who can read the play, and understand what he reads. Mr. Steevens knew that Shakspeare, skilfully preparing us for the mournful change we are about to witness in Macbeth, paints in deep colours the irregular fury of his actions, and the remorse that preys on his heart;—he knew, that the blood-stained monster

—— cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of rule;\*—

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 2.



that he feels

His secret murders sticking on his hands ;\*—

and that the poet finishes this terrific picture of self-condemnation and abhorrence, by adding:—

His pester'd senses do recoil, and start

When all that is within him doth condemn

Itself for being there :†—

But, the learned editor quite forgets that, in the same scene, good care is taken that the tyrant shall not so far forfeit all claim to our esteem, as to fall into contempt, and be entirely odious to our sight: His original valour remains undiminished, and

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 2.

† Ib.



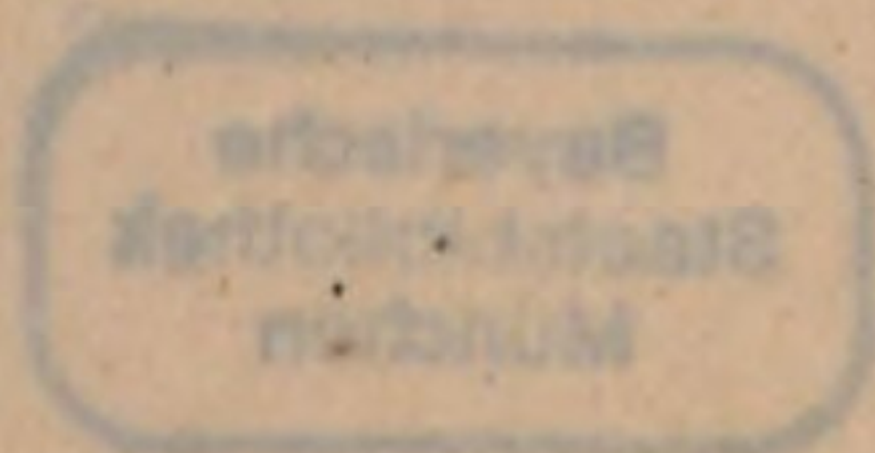
buoys him up with wild vehemence in this total wreck of his affairs: in spite of us, he commands our admiration, when we see him—hated, abandoned, overwhelmed by calamity public and domestic,—still persist, unshrinking, to brave his enemies, and manfully prepare against the siege with which their combined armies threaten him in his almost ungarrisoned fortress:—

*Cath.* Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies;\*—

and the English general presently after says of him:—

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 2.





*Siz.* We learn no other, but *the confident*  
*tyrant*

Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure  
Our setting down before it.\*

In the first speech which we hear from the mouth of Macbeth in his reverse of fortune, Shakspeare still continues to show an anxiety that, though we detest the tyrant for his cruelties, we should yet respect him for his courage:—

*Macb.* Bring me no more reports; let them  
fly all;

Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,  
I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy  
Malcolm?

---

\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 4.



Was he not born of woman? The spirits that  
know

All mortal consequents, pronounc'd me thus :  
Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of  
woman,

Shall e'er have power on thee.\*—Then fly,  
false Thanes,

---

\* Mr. Steevens's edition has, for an obvious cause, been used in the quotations from Shakspeare through this Essay: It is time, however, to protest, in the strongest terms, against the unwarrantable liberties he continually takes with his author. If Heminge and Condell were, in fairness, chargeable with all the faults which Mr. Steevens, their unsparing censor, industriously lays to their account; still they have not done Shakspeare half the injury he would receive, if the interpolations, omissions, and transpositions of the edition of 1803 should ever be permitted to form the text of his works. This gentleman, certainly, had many of the talents and acquirements expected in a good editor of our poet; but still he wanted more



And mingle with the English epicures :  
The mind I sway by, and the heart I bear,  
Shall never sag with doubt, nor shake with  
fear.\*

If Mr. Steevens had well examined the two concluding lines of this resolute defiance, he might, perhaps, have paraphrased them in a note to this pur-

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than one of the most requisite of them. Mr. Steevens had no ear for the colloquial metre of our old dramatists : it is not possible, on any other supposition, to account for his whimsical desire, and the pains he takes, to fetter the enchanting freedom of Shakspeare's numbers, and compel them into the heroic march and measured cadence of epic versification. The *native wood-notes wild* that could delight the cultivated ear of Milton, must not be modulated anew, to indulge the fastidiousness of those who read verses by their fingers.

\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 3.



port:—Macbeth says, that no doubt shall relax *the mind he sways by*, i. e. the thorough confidence with which he relies on the predictions of the omniscient spirits; nor any danger appal *the heart he bears*, i. e. his own conscious intrepidity.

It is only left us, to suppose that the annotator's emotions, like those of the readers just now alluded to, occasioned his gliding too quickly over this passage: he must, otherwise, have perceived Shakspeare's design in it; and would not then have misrepresented him so grossly, as to say that pusillanimity is among the stains that blot the original brightness of Macbeth's character.



To return to Richard, and his “playing the eaves-dropper:” Mr. Whateley says, that *his going round the camp just before the battle, to listen if any meant to shrink from him, is proper on that particular occasion.\**—

Very likely, it may be so: But, with what consistency can suspicion be commended, as proper, in Richard, while in Macbeth it is invariably branded for timidity?

The *Remarks*, bent on exalting Richard at the expense of Macbeth, say:—*The same determined spirit carries him through the bloody business of murdering his nephews: and,*

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\* *Remarks*, p. 46.



*when Buckingham shews a reluctance to be concerned in it, he immediately looks out for another ; some*

———— iron-witted fool,  
Or unrespective boy,\*

*more apt for his purpose. Had Macbeth been thus disappointed in the person to whom he had opened himself, it would have disconcerted any design he had formed.†*

Unluckily for Mr. Whateley, this is another assertion contradicted by the fact : It is certain, that the Rufians to whom Macbeth opens himself, when he has resolved on the murder of Banquo, are not wrought

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\* K. Richard, Act iv. Sc. 2.

† Remarks, p. 36, 37.



to his purpose in their first interview;  
yet this disappointment does not dis-  
concert his design; he sends for them  
a second time:—

*Macb.* Was it not yesterday we spoke to-  
gether?

*Mur.* It was, so please your highness.

*Macb.* Well then, now  
Have you considered of my speeches?

\* \* \* \* \*

————— Do you find  
Your patience so predominant in your nature,  
That you can let this go? &c.\*—

he repeats his former conversation  
with them; and having, by strong  
arguments and seductive promises,

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 1.



at last prevailed on them to undertake the deed, the royal assassin persists with so determined a spirit in the bloody business, that he even condescends, himself, to instruct his barbarous instruments as to the hour and spot of its accomplishment.

The *Remarks* affirm, that—*All the crimes Richard commits, are for his advancement, not for his security.\**

Here, again, is an assertion in direct opposition to the fact: Richard, like Macbeth, has very distinct motives for his inhuman crimes: Richard removes Clarence and Hastings,—as Macbeth does Duncan,—because they

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\* *Remarks* p. 39. 43.



stand in his way to the throne ; but, having once ascended it, he murders his wife and nephews, it is plain, only—as Macbeth does Banquo,—for the purpose of maintaining himself there in security.

The *Remarks* are under a still stranger mistake with regard to the sentiment of Macbeth, in imagining that *he catches the terrors he sees expressed in the countenance of the Messenger who informs him of the numbers of the enemy*.\*—

*Mess.* There is ten thousand——

*Macb.* Geese, villain?

*Mess.* Soldiers, sir.

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\* *Remarks*, p. 49. 69. 73.



*Macb.* Go, prick thy face, and over-red thy  
fear,  
Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch?  
Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of  
thine  
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-  
face?\*

Macbeth does indeed, and very reasonably, apprehend that the terrified aspect of the Messenger may depress the spirits of the few followers who still adhere to his cause; but, it is clear, from the angry contempt with which he treats both him and his report of the approach of Malcolm's army, that the coward's coun-

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 3.



tenance has no dejecting influence on his own mind.

But, what is Richard's composure in a parallel situation of his affairs? The tidings brought him of rebellious insurrections, first in Devonshire and then in Kent, being followed up by news of the army which Buckingham has raised against him, he is alarmed at this accumulation of dangers; overcome by wrathful despite, he rails, like Macbeth, at the ill-boding Messengers; and, in his boiling impatience, forgets himself so far as to strike one of them,\* exclaiming:—

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\* Macbeth is placed in a situation not entirely unlike that in which Richard finds himself, when, by the direction of all the old copies, he strikes



Out on ye, owls ! nothing but songs of death ?  
There, take thou that.      (*He strikes him.*)\*

---

the officer who brings him this unwelcome news :  
An observation respecting an error that has crept  
into the margin of the play of Macbeth, may not,  
perhaps, be thought improperly introduced here.

[The nonsensical change of the original *should*  
into *shall*, in the Messenger's speech, must be ac-  
cidental : Mr. Steevens could not intend it.]

*Macb.* Thou com'st to use thy tongue ; thy  
story quickly.

*Mess.* Gracious my lord,  
I *shall* report that which, I say, I saw,  
But know not how to do it.

*Macb.* Well, say, sir.

*Mess.* As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,  
The wood began to move.

*Macb.* Liar and slave !      (*Striking him.*)

*Macbeth*, Act v. Sc. 5.

This stage-direction is not found in any of the  
Folios, the oldest copies of this tragedy : it was

\* K. Richard, Act iv. Sc. 4.



The *Remarks* still find cause to blame Macbeth: *He calls for his armour;—notwithstanding Seyton's remonstrance, that*

It is not needed yet,\*

---

first interpolated by Mr. Rowe, and has been retained by every subsequent editor. Such outrageous violence does not belong to the feelings of a person overwhelmed with surprise, half-doubting half-believing an event,—at once, in nature most strange, and to himself of the most fatal importance. It is a direction irreconcilable to Macbeth's emotions at the moment for which it is given, and should in future editions be omitted. It may be added, without straining the matter too far, that Sir William Davenant would, in all likelihood, have set down this direction in his *Macbeth*, 4to. 1674, if either the practice of the Stage under Shakspeare's own management, or the action of Mr. Betterton, who played the part by Sir William's alteration, had invited its insertion.

\* *Macbeth*, Act v. Sc. 3.



*he persists in putting it on ; calls for it again eagerly afterwards ; bids the person who is assisting him,*

Dispatch ;\*

*then, the moment it is on, pulls it off again, and directs his attendants to †*

Bring it after. ‡

The tragedy of King Richard the Third will amply supply whatever answer is necessary on this occasion.

*Rat.* Most mighty sovereign, on the western  
coast

Rideth a puissant navy ; to the shore  
Throng many doubtful hollow-hearted friends,

\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 3.

† Remarks, p. 70.

‡ Ib.



Unarm'd, and unresolved to beat them back.  
Tis thought that Richmond is their admiral;  
And there they hull, expecting but the aid  
Of Buckingham, to welcome them ashore.

*K. Rich.* Some light-foot friend post to the  
Duke of Norfolk;—

Ratcliff, thyself;—or Catesby:—Where is he?

*Cate.* Here, my good lord.

*K. Rich.* Catesby, fly to the Duke.

*Cate.* I will, my lord, with all convenient  
haste.

*K. Rich.* Ratcliff, come hither: Post to  
Salisbury;

When thou com'st thither,—Dull, unmindful  
villain,      (*To Catesby.*)

Why stay'st thou here, and go'st not to the  
Duke?

*Cate.* First, mighty liege, tell me your high-  
ness' pleasure,

What from your grace I shall deliver to him.



*K. Rich.* O, true, good Catesby:— Bid him  
levy straight  
The greatest strength and power he can make,  
And meet me suddenly at Salisbury.

*Cate.* I go.

*Rat.* What, may it please you, shall I do at  
Salisbury?

*K. Rich.* Why, what would'st thou do  
there, before I go?

*Rat.* Your highness told me, I should post  
before.

*K. Rich.* My mind is chang'd.\*

Do these scenes of busy distraction  
afford a hint of anything like timidity  
in either of these guilty usurpers?  
Or, is there one jot more of confusion  
and inconsistency in the hurry of

---

\* *K. Richard*, Act iv. Sc. 4.



Macbeth, than in the perturbation of  
Richard ?

When Richard *asks*,

My Lord of Surrey, why look you so sad ?\*—

and afterwards *enquires*,

Saw'st thou the melancholy Lord Northum-  
berland ?†—

he is not *satisfied upon being told that  
the Earl and Surry were busied in*‡

Cheering up the soldiers :§—

he would, indeed, fain persuade him-  
self to be satisfied ; but his own ex-  
press words prove, that he is very far  
from being really at ease:—

\* K. Richard, Act v. Sc. 3.

‡ Remarks, p. 76.

† Ib.

§ Ib.



*K. Rich.* I am satisfied. Give me a bowl  
of wine :

I have not the alacrity of spirit,  
Nor cheer of mind, that I was wont to have.\*

In his enquiry as to the sadness of the spirited Lord Surrey, and his observation of the melancholy of so powerful a leader as the Earl of Northumberland, Richard makes exactly the same reference to the disordered state of his own mind, as Macbeth does, while to the Physician he appears anxious only for the recovery of the Queen.

*Macb.* How does your patient, Doctor ?

*Doct.* Not so sick, my lord,

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\* K. Richard, Act v. Sc. 3.



As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.

*Macb.* Cure her of that.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd ;  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow ;  
Rase out the written troubles of the brain ;  
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous  
stuff,  
Which weighs upon the heart ?\*

Each of the tyrants alike, in his  
concern about the feelings of others,  
clearly reveals the agitation of his  
own breast.

It is true, that *Richard represents the  
enemy as a troop only of banditti* ;†

\* Macbeth, Act. v. Sc. 3.

† Remarks, p. 77.



A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,  
 A scum of Bretagnes, and base lackey peasants :\*—

and it is true, that Macbeth, in like manner, speaks with contempt of his enemies and revolted nobles:—

Fly, false Thanes,  
 And mingle with the English epicures, &c.†

Mr. Whateley, however, assumes more than he can maintain, in urging this harangue to his army as a proof of Richard's intrepidity; for it does not express the tyrant's real opinion of Richmond's followers. The inferiority of the foe is a topic on which

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\* K. Richard, Act v. Sc. 3.      † Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 3.



generals, for the encouragement of their own troops, are by poets and historians customarily made to dwell, even to ostentation : But it is impossible to believe, that Richard seriously despises an enemy, against whom he thinks it necessary to make the most active preparations, and in whose ranks he counts such men, as—

Sir William Herbert, a renowned soldier ;  
 Sir Gilbert Talbot, Sir William Stanley ;  
 Oxford, redoubted Pembroke, Sir James  
     Blunt,  
 And Rice ap Thomas, with a valiant crew ;  
 And many others of great fame and worth.\*

Macbeth and Richard are now to

---

\* K. Richard, Act v. Sc. 5.



be compared while their minds are under the influence of visions and superstition. It is true, that the guilty conscience of Macbeth, overpowering his judgement, conjures up before him the accusing ghost of Banquo: but it is equally true, that his constitutional courage enables him resolutely to face this ghastly fantom of his disordered imagination:—

*Lady M.* Are you a man?

*Macb.* Ay, and a bold one, that dare look  
on that,

Which might appal the devil.

*Lady Macb.* O proper stuff!

This is the very painting of your fear.

\* ' \* \* \* \*



*Macb.* How say you ?

Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.

\* \* \* \* \*

What man dare, I dare ;

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,

The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger,

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves

Shall never tremble : Or, be alive again,

And dare me to the desert with thy sword ;

If trembling I inhabit, then protest me

The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow !

Unreal mockery, hence ! \*

Notwithstanding the firmness which Macbeth summons into his defiance of this frightful “painting of his fear,” it is not to be supposed, but that he labours with an inward terror while

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\* Macbeth, Act. iii. Sc. 4.



he utters it:—Neither can it be denied, that the intrepid Richard is shaken with at least equal alarm, when, starting from the dream in which the souls of those whom he had murdered had appeared to him, he cries:—

Have mercy, Jesu !—Soft !—I did but dream.  
O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict  
me !—

The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.  
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling  
flesh, &c.\*

That *Macbeth's superstition proceeds from credulity*,† is a truth not likely

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\* K. Richard, Act v. Sc. 3.

† Remarks, p. 59.



to be disputed: but, superstition is a weakness by no means incompatible with personal courage: if it were, Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens would not be able a moment longer to sustain their own character of Richard; for its influence operates as powerfully in him, as in Macbeth: Macbeth's superstition rests on the assurances of supernatural agents, whose first promises to him had already been made good; Richard condescends to be affected by dreams and omens:—

*K. Rich.* Richmond!—When I was last at  
Exeter,  
The Mayor in courtesy show'd me the Castle,  
And call'd it—Rouge-mont : at which name,  
I started :



Because a bard of Ireland told me once,  
I should not live long after I saw Richmond.\*

Again, while putting his army in  
array on the morning of the battle:—

*K. Rich.* The sun will not be seen to-day;  
The sky doth frown and lour upon our army.—  
I would, these dewy tears were from the  
ground.†

And again,—

Methought, the souls of all that I had mur-  
der'd

Came to my tent: and every one did threat  
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of  
Richard.‡

It will be said, perhaps,—and it  
will be granted,—that Richard pre-

\* *K. Richard*, Act v. Sc. 2.

† *Ib.*

‡ *Ib.* Sc. 3.



sently stifles these apprehensions: it is here asserted only, that he feels them, as Macbeth does; and that Macbeth, like him, suppresses them. The wood of Birnam advances towards Dunsinane: The tyrant

Doubts the equivocation of the fiend;  
and, believing the laws of nature inverted to his ruin,

Pulls in resolution:  
instantly, however, like Richard, he shakes off this momentary dismay, and heroically rushing to battle, exclaims,—

Blow, wind! come wrack!  
At least, we'll die with harness on our back.\*

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 7.



The *Remarks*, still bent on the degradation of Macbeth, proceed:—  
*That apprehension* (personal fear) *was his reason for these murthers, he intimates himself: when meditating on that of Banquo, he observes, that—*

Things, bad begun, make strong themselves  
 by ill:\*

*and, when that of Macduff is in contemplation, he says,†—*

I am in blood

Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er.‡

If these expressions cannot be suggested to Macbeth by any feeling but

\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 2.

† Remarks, p. 43.

‡ Id. Act iii. Sc. 4.



that of personal fear, to what cause are we to attribute the very same sentiment in the mouth of Richard, when he meditates the murder of his nephews, and a marriage with their sister?

*K. Rich.* I must be married to my brother's daughter,  
Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass :—  
Murder her brothers, and then marry her !  
Uncertain way of gain ! But I am in  
So far in blood, that sin will pluck on sin.\*

In Mr. Cibber's admirable alteration of Shakspeare's *King Richard the Third*, Richard, smothering the cries of conscience, sternly adds,—

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\* K. Richard, Act iv. Sc. 2.



————— More lives must yet be drain'd:  
Crowns, got with blood, must be with blood  
maintain'd :\*—

and, in a subsequent situation, he  
says,—

When I look back, 'tis terrible retreating;  
I cannot bear the thought, nor dare repent.†

Here Mr. Cibber does but paraphrase the two passages cited above by the *Remarks*: and he expresses their meaning so justly, as to make it unnecessary to insist further on the nature of the apprehensions to which both these desperate usurpers are a prey.

In his dissertation, Mr. Steevens

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\* Cibber's *K. Richard*, Act iii. Sc. 2.

† *Id.* Act v. Sc. 5.



says,—“ The truly brave are never disgraced by unnecessary deeds of cruelty. The victims of Richard, therefore, are merely such as obstructed his progress to the crown, or betrayed the confidence he had reposed in their assurances of fidelity. Macbeth cuts off a whole defenceless family, though the father of it was the only reasonable object of his fear.”

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 299.

Mr. Steevens is so indulgent to Richard, as totally to overlook the unnecessary cruelty with which he condemns a son to death, only because the father refuses compliance with his orders:—



*K. Rich.* What says Lord Stanley? will  
he bring his power?

*Mess.* My lord, he doth deny to come.

*K. Rich.* Off with his son George's head.

Indeed, the considerate humanity, which the Dissertation now attributes to Richard, cannot easily be reconciled to the temper it prepares us to expect in him, when, a little before, it says,—“ Richard was so thoroughly designed for a daring, impious, and obdurate character, that even his birth was attended by prodigies, and his person armed to do the earliest mischief of which infancy is capable.”

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 298.

If, by the *truly brave* mentioned above, we could understand the inge-



nious commentator to mean the *virtuously brave*, his maxim would be undeniable: but if by the *truly brave*, he means the *constitutionally brave*,—as, by instancing the example of King Richard, he evidently does,—then it is false; for, unhappily, the *truly brave*, in this sense, have stained the records of all ages with deeds of unnecessary cruelty.

“Had Richard,” says the Dissertation, “once been”—(like Macbeth,)—“a feeling and conscientious character, when his end drew nigh he might also have betrayed evidences of timidity; and if Macbeth”—(like Richard,)—“originally had been a hardened villain,”—(a hardened villain



who is incapable of an unnecessary cruelty!)—"no terrors might have obtruded themselves in his close of life."

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 298.

In this period, the commentator does but gravely assure us that, if Richard and Macbeth had not been what they were, they would, in his opinion, have been something else. Macbeth's terrors at the close of life will be considered presently: in the mean time, Mr. Steevens is equitable enough to own that "*he exhibits a specimen of determined intrepidity*, when the completion of the prophecy, and the challenge of Macduff, have taught him that life is no longer tenable."

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 299.



It is hardly worth while to reply to the author of the *Remarks*, when he insinuates it as a proof of timidity in Macbeth, that, after the murder of Duncan, *all his answers to the trivial questions of Lenox and Macduff are evidently given by a man thinking of something else: and that, by taking a tincture from the subject of his attention, they become equivocal.\**

*Macd.* Is the King stirring, worthy Thane?

*Macb.* Not yet.

*Len.* Goes the King  
From hence to-day?

*Macb.* He does:—he did appoint so.

*Len.* The night has been unruly: Where  
we lay,

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\* *Remarks*, p. 33.



Our chimnies were blown down: and, as they  
say,

Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams  
of death;

And prophesying, with accents terrible,  
Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,  
New hatch'd to the woeful time. The ob-  
scure bird

Clamour'd the live-long night: some say, the  
earth

Was feverous, and did shake.

*Macb.* 'Twas a rough night.\*

These answers are not meant to be  
equivocal: they are signs neither of  
guiltiness nor innocence; they would  
be just as properly made by Macbeth,

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\* Macbeth, Act ii. Sc. 2.



whether he were the most hardened monster that ever outraged humanity, or had remained as loyal a subject as ever received his Sovereign under his roof. Macbeth, in the circumstances in which he finds himself, cannot be expected *to pay much attention to the account of the roughness of the night, or to be willing to keep up this conversation* :\* but, on this occasion, his timidity no more betrays his crime to Lenox, than it does by and by to his guests at the banquet, when, after the assassination of Banquo, *he affects to complain of his absence from the feast, that he may*

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\* Remarks, p. 34.



*not be suspected of knowing the cause of it :\**—

*Macb.* Here had we now our country's  
honour roof'd,  
Were the grac'd person of our Banquo present;  
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness,  
Than pity for mischance !

and, in a few moments, again:—

Give me some wine: fill full:  
I drink to the general joy of the whole table,  
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;  
Would he were here !†

These expressions of solicitude for Banquo's safety, and regret for his absence, would have become the dissembling traitor just as naturally, if

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\* Remarks, p. 60.

† Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 4.



he had been perfectly innocent, and Banquo the most valued friend he had in the world.

There is scarcely a speech Macbeth delivers, that may not be brought within the scope of this critic's argument, if refinements of so fanciful a kind are to be admitted as proofs of timidity. Mr. Whateley ought to have known that this attention to Banquo, so far from being the sudden and irresistible impulse of his timidity in guilt, is all studied, and prepared beforehand: Shakspeare expressly bids us look for it, when, immediately before the supper, Macbeth thus addresses the Queen, whom he keeps in ignorance of the intended murder:—



Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;  
Present him eminence, both with eye and  
tongue :

Unsafe the while, that we  
Must lave our honours in these flattering  
streams ;  
And make our faces vizards to our hearts,  
Disguising what they are.\*

It is true, that Macbeth is with difficulty wrought to the murder of his gracious King; but it is not true, that he discovers any *hesitation and dulness to dare*,† after he has imbrued his hands in the blood of Duncan. When once he enters the path of guilt, he treads it with resolute rapidity:—

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 2.

† Remarks, p. 61.



The flighty purpose never is o'ertook,  
Unless the deed go with it :\*—

he needs no other instigators to the death of Banquo, Fleance, and Macduff, but the dark and violent passions of his own corrupted heart:—

Strange things I have in head, that will to  
hand;

Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd.†

If Shakspeare, after the murder of Duncan, meant Macbeth to show *dulness and hesitation* in evil, he has, with the most unlucky forgetfulness, thoroughly defeated his own design:—

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\* Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 1.

† Id. Act iii. Sc. 4.



*Hec.* Upon the corner of the moon  
 There hangs a vaporous drop profound ;  
 I'll catch it ere it come to ground :  
 And that, distill'd by magic slights,  
 Shall raise such artificial sprights,  
 As, by the strength of their illusion,  
 Shall draw him on to his confusion :  
 He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
 His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear.\*

The description which the Sorceress here gives of a mind abandoned to reprobation, makes it impossible to suppose, that Shakspeare intended Macbeth any longer to feel the slightest fear, or reluctance, to commit the worst crimes his ambition

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\* Macbeth, Act iii. Sc. 5.



could suggest for the secure establishment of his throne.

The *Remarks* would next presume, that Macbeth is clearly convicted of cowardice on his own acknowledgment: Alluding principally to the passages already refuted, they say,—  
*These are all symptoms of timidity, which he confesses to have been natural to him, when he owns,\*—*

The time has been, my senses would have  
cool'd

To hear a night-shriek ; and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse, and stir  
As life were in't.†

Had the author of the *Remarks*

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\* *Remarks*, p. 49.

† *Macbeth*, Act v. Sc. 5.



quoted the whole speech on this occasion, instead of giving only an extract from it, he must have flatly contradicted his own assertion. If Macbeth, as the *Remarks* interpret these lines, confesses that he was *formerly* timid ; still they must allow that, in the same breath, as it will in a moment be seen, he denies that he has any such weakness in his constitution *at present* : Now, if they take Macbeth's word for the state of his mind in the one instance, they are bound to receive it for truth in the other ; and, consequently, Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens are no longer justified in charging him with pusillanimity.



The speech, however, relates neither to bravery, nor timidity; and Mr. Whateley has again entirely mistaken the sentiment of the poet. Macbeth hears the shrieks of women, and demands with haughty indifference,—

What noise is that?\*

but instantly reflecting on his insensibility to cries so piercing, and uttered too by female voices, he is shocked at the total want of common feeling in his bosom, and, “sadly summing what he has lost,” vents his self-reproach in this touching effusion of remorse:—

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 5.



I have almost forgot the taste of fears :  
 The time has been, my senses would have  
     cool'd  
 To hear a night-shriek ; and my fell of hair  
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
 As life were in't : I have supp'd full with  
     horrors ;  
 Direness, familiar to my slaught'rous thoughts,  
 Cannot once start me.\*

The fears of which Macbeth laments that he has forgotten the taste, are not fears of danger personal to himself;—(of which it would be strange indeed, if he were sorry to be rid;)—the fears of which he regrets the loss, are those tender apprehensions which

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 5.



formerly he instinctively and keenly felt, not only for any fellow-creature in real peril and calamity, but even for the fictitious distresses of tragical romance. In this beautiful passage, the tyrant, whose nature had been “ full of the milk of human kindness,” mournfully contemplates the dismal change produced in his humane (not *timid*) disposition, by the habitual practice of such cruelties, as have finally hardened his temper against any impression of sympathy, against all the charities of our nature.

Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens, while they regard these sentiments as proofs of timidity in Macbeth, unac-



countably leave unobserved the similar, and stronger, terrors and remorse that harrow up the soul of the intrepid and hardened Richard:—

*K. Rich.* My conscience hath a thousand  
several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain.  
Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree,  
Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree;  
All several sins, all us'd in each degree,  
Throng to the bar, crying all,—Guilty!  
guilty!  
I shall despair.—There is no creature loves  
me;  
And, if I die, no soul will pity me.\*

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\* *K. Richard*, Act v. Sc. 3.



If we might decide on the ruling character of men from their occasional starts of feeling, this passage would unanswerably prove that, in Mr. Whateley's acceptation of the word, Richard is more timid than Macbeth: for, of these two prodigies of guilt, he certainly appears the most fearfully alive to all the consequences of his enormous crimes, and the most terribly appalled by the reproaches of a condemning conscience.

Mr. Steevens upbraids Macbeth, that "he would at last secure himself by flight, but that flight is become an impossibility."

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 299.

Was retreat ever thought disgrace-



ful, when the superior numbers and resistless good fortune of the foe made all further struggle useless? Does not history, ancient and modern, abound with examples of famous warriors who have magnanimously endured defeat, and reserved themselves to the hour of future victory? Is Hannibal disgraced, because he fled from the disastrous field of Zama? Is Charles of Sweden less renowned for intrepidity, because he was, at last, able to mount his horse and escape from the plains of Poltava?—Yes: Macbeth, if he could cut his way through Malcolm's army, would flee from a beleaguered and untenable castle,—(as Shakspeare knew



he did,\*)—to make a stand, where he might face his enemies, and fight for his crown on fairer terms of battle.

Let it be granted, however, that to turn his back on danger, misbecomes a brave man under any circumstances:—What excuse then will Mr. Steevens find for Richard, who twice consults his safety by flight? Once, when he deserts that great man, the

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\* Macbeth's flight to Lunfannaine is mentioned by Holinshed, on whose fabulous history Shakespeare has founded this play:—The authentic account of his death is given by Lord Hailes: "Macbeth retreated to the fastnesses of the North, and protracted the war. His people forsook his standard. Malcolm attacked him at Lunfanan in Aberdeenshire: Abandoned by his few remaining followers, Macbeth fell."

*Annals of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 2. 4to.  
1776. Edinburgh.



Duke, his father, in the battle of Wakefield, where he fell:—

*Edw.* I wonder, how our princely father  
'scap'd :

Or whether he be 'scap'd away, or no,  
From Clifford's and Northumberland's pursuit.

*Rich.* I cannot joy, until I be resolv'd  
Where our right valiant father is become :\*—  
and a second time, when he flies and  
leaves the King, his brother, to the  
mercy of Warwick and the Lancas-  
trians :—

[*Enter Warwick, Somerset, &c. Warwick,  
and the rest, cry all—Warwick ! War-  
wick !—and set upon the guard ; crying—  
Arm ! Arm !—Warwick, and the rest,  
bringing the King out, &c. Gloster and  
Hastings fly.*]

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\* K. Henry VI. 3 p. Act ii. Sc. 1.



*Som.* What are they that fly there?

*War.* Richard and Hastings: Let them go,  
here's the Duke.

*K. Edw.* The Duke! why, Warwick, when  
we parted last,  
Thou call'dst me King.\*

“Suicide,” says the Dissertation,  
“has also entered his thoughts; though  
this idea, in a paroxysm of noisy rage,  
is suppressed.”

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 297.

*Macb.* Why should I play the Roman fool,  
and die  
On mine own sword? Whiles I see lives, the  
gashes  
Do better upon them.†

This is the insinuated intention of  
suicide; and this fixed determination,

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\* *K. Henry VI.* 3 p. Act iv. Sc. 3.    † *Macbeth*, Act v. Sc. 7.



though the fatal wood is at his gates, to fight as long as he sees an enemy to strike at, a boisterous paroxysm of rage!—But, suppose he had entertained such an idea: The indignant impatience which would fly to this sad relief, is too honourably countenanced by those Roman fools he speaks of, to pass for a proof of cowardice in Macbeth.

“ It must be acknowledged,” continues Mr. Steevens, “ that his apprehensions had betrayed him into a strange inconsistency of belief. As he persisted in supposing he could be destroyed by none of woman born, by what means did he think he could destroy himself?”

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 297.



It raises a smile, to find that an able commentator on Shakspeare could argue, that Macbeth reckoned *himself* among the enemies, against whose attempts the promise of the Apparition was to defend him; and that he should not see, if there were, in reality, any inconsistency of belief here, that the fault would be chargeable on the poet's own carelessness, not on Macbeth's confusion.

The *Remarks*, to sum up all, would make it a reproach to Macbeth, that, *when the hour of extremity presses upon him, he can find no refuge but in despair.\**

What timidity there is in this, it is not easy to perceive. Macbeth finds

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\* *Remarks*, p. 68.



refuge, where alone the brave man in the hour of extremity can find it, in himself,—in an unyielding spirit, that nobly, though hopelessly, struggles to the last with overpowering adversity:—he rushes to battle, and encounters the only enemy he had to fear; the strange completion of his destiny suddenly suspends the vigour of his powers; but, in a moment, scorning the juggling fiends who have deceived him, he rouses all himself, and boldly trusts his fate to that in-born intrepidity on which he knows he can rely:—

I will not yield,

To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's  
feet,



And to be baited with the rabble's curse.  
 Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,  
 And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,  
 Yet I will try the last: Before my body  
 I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff,  
 And damn'd be him that first cries,—*Hold,*  
*enough.\**

Mr. Steevens allows that, driven to extremity, Macbeth “very naturally prefers a manly and violent death, to a shameful and lingering termination of life.”

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 297.

True; he does so: but such a preference would not be *very natural* to him, if he were a coward.

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 7.



In a word, the conduct, which the *Remarks* stigmatise for timidity in Macbeth, is of exactly the same nature as the desperate resolution of Richard:—

Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,  
And I will stand the hazard of the die.\*

The dauntless determination of each of the tyrants, in the battle that avenged his subjects on the horrors of his reign, is the result of that agonizing emotion of grief, shame, and pride, which, if it be despair, is, at least, the despair of an innate and unextinguishable courage.

The principal arguments employed

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\* K. Richard, Act v. Sc. 4.



by Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens are now answered: to follow them through every groundless assertion, and every minute inference drawn from their erroneous opinions, would be to run into prolixity,—(a blame, perhaps, already incurred,)—without adding force to refutation.

The *Remarks* and the *Dissertation* requiring no further reply to their positive contents, it is time to turn to their omissions, and take some notice of the impression we receive from the general tenor of the play, as it regards the subject of this Essay.

That Shakspeare has not put into any mouth the slightest insinuation against the personal courage of Mac-



beth, is in itself a decisive proof, that he never meant his nature should be liable to so base a reproach. His deadliest enemies, they who have suffered most from his oppression and cruelty, in the deepest expressions of their detestation of his person and triumph over his fallen condition, are never allowed by the poet to utter a syllable in derogation from his known character of intrepidity. Malcolm, robbed of the crown, and driven into exile, by his bloody usurpation, calls him

The devilish Macbeth ;\*  
and charges him with being

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\* Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 3.



\* \* \* \* Bloody,  
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,  
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin  
That has a name :\*—

Cathness and Siward express themselves thus, when speaking of him;—

*Cath.* Some say, he's mad; others, that  
                  lesser hate him,  
Do call it valiant fury :†—

*Siw.* We learn no other, but the confident  
                  tyrant  
Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure  
Our sitting down before it.‡—

Some, we see, ascribe his actions to  
*madness*; but then, it is a *valiant* distraction: some call him *tyrant*; but then, he is a *confident* tyrant: All know

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\* Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 3.   † Id. Act v. Sc. 2.   ‡ Id. Sc. 4.



his character too well, to upbraid him with cowardice.

Even Macduff, who has good cause to deny him every other human virtue, yet testifies loudly to his valour, when, ranging the fight in quest of this “Hell-kite,” he makes extraordinary uproar the guide of his search, concluding that, where the battle rages wildest, there the “Fiend of Scotland” must of necessity be found:—

That way the noise is: Tyrant, show thy face.—

\* \* \* [*Alarums.*] \* \* \*

\* \* \* There thou should'st be;

By this great clatter, one of greatest note

Seems bruited: Let me find him, fortune!\*

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\* Macbeth, Act v. Sc. 7.



The appeals which Macbeth makes to his own conscious valour for support in all his extremities, are another conclusive proof that Shakspeare means him to be esteemed a man of indisputable spirit; in the mouth of one whom we knew to be a braggart, these self-confident expressions would degenerate into mere farce, and provoke only our ridicule and laughter. This point ought to have been noticed earlier, among the other mistakes of the *Remarks* and the *Dissertation*.

In the performance, on the Stage,—the valour of the tyrant, hateful as he is, invariably commands the admiration of every spectator of the play,



rude or learned: this circumstance alone would be an evident demonstration that the poet never intended we should entertain a doubt of his dauntless intrepidity: And, indeed, were not the horror excited by Macbeth's crimes, qualified by the delight we receive from our esteem for his personal courage, the representation of this tragedy would be insupportable.

Macbeth, unable to bear the reproach of cowardice from a woman,—a woman too who holds the complete sway of his affections and his reason,—in one sentence vindicates to himself the dignity of true courage, and unfolds the whole nature of the character we are to expect in him:—



I dare do all that may become a man;

Who dares do more, is none.\*

“ Of this line and a half, of this distinction of true from false fortitude,”

Dr. Johnson is of opinion, “ it may be almost said, that it ought to bestow immortality on the author, though all his other productions had been lost.”

*Shakspeare*, vol. x. p. 84.

We have an old poet who has left us a beautiful description of true valour:—

It is the greatest virtue, and the safety

Of all mankind the object of its danger:

A certain mean 'twixt fear and confidence:

No inconsiderate rashness, or vain appetite

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\* *Macbeth*, Act i. Sc. 7.



Of false encountring formidable things;  
 But a true science of distinguishing  
 What's good or evil. It springs out of reason,  
 And intends to perfect honesty; the scope  
 Is always honour, and the public good, &c.\*

This is the valour, to which Macbeth's claim can never justly be disputed.

Mr. Whateley and Mr. Steevens have entirely overlooked the essential difference there is between the fear of doing wrong, and the fear of external

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\* The New Inn. Com. Act iv. Sc. 3. Vol. v. p. 413. Ben Jonson's Works. 9 vol. 8vo. 1816. Edited by William Gifford, Esq.—by whose learned and generous labours *Old Ben's* forgotten works and injured character are restored to the merited admiration and esteem of the world.



harm,—between the blind animal ferocity that goads the brute, and the noble motive that inspires the rational intrepidity of man: Here is the cause of the mistakes they have committed; and indeed it has led them so far into error, that they almost expose themselves to be accused of maintaining, that courage and virtue are never inmates of the same breast.

From this review of the characters of these bloody usurpers, it cannot, it is clear, with truth be affirmed of Richard, that *upon no occasion, however tremendous, and at no moment of his life, however unguarded, does he betray the least symptom of fear:—* nor of Macbeth, that *he is always*



*shaken upon great, and frequently upon trivial occasions.\**

Macbeth and Richard are, both, as intrepid as man can be; yet it may be said of each, without any diminution of that praise, that he is sometimes terror-struck at the recollection of his crimes. The characters that Shakspeare draws, are human creatures; and however their peculiarities may individuate them, yet they are always connected with the general nature of man by some fine link of universal interest, and by some passion to which they are liable in common with their kind. On the eve

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\* Remarks, p. 46.



of the battle that is to decide his doom, Richard acknowledges a conscience: Bold in supernatural assurances of security from all peril, Macbeth sighs for the protection of his former popularity.

Ambition is the sole impulse that directs every action of Richard's life: his heart, in which every malignant and violent passion reigns uncontrolled, is hardened in wickedness: his mind is sunk into that depth of hopeless depravity, where the bad believe all other men to be as abandoned as themselves: he attains the crown by hypocrisy habitual to him, and by murders, that entail no remorse on the stern valour with which he main-



tains his ill-acquired sovereignty. Ambition is implanted in the nature of Macbeth; but it is a blameless ambition:

\* \* \* Thou would'st be great;  
Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it. What thou  
would'st highly,  
That would'st thou holily; would'st not play  
false,  
And yet would'st wrongly win.\*

The predictions of the Witches en-  
flame him with the expectation of a  
crown, and the daring impatience of  
his wife determines him "to catch  
the nearest way" to it. Ambition,

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\* Macbeth, Act i. Sc. 5.



inordinate and lawless, now becomes the predominant motive of his actions; but it is not the single characteristic of his mind; his original sense of right and justice still holds possession there, continually to renew the remembrance of what he was, and sharpen all the stings of self-condemnation.

The character of Richard is simple; that of Macbeth is mixed: Richard is only intrepid; Macbeth, intrepid and feeling. Richard's crimes are the suggestions of his own disposition, originally bad, and at last confirmed in evil; he knows no "compunctious visitings of nature;" alive only to the exigencies of his situation, he is always at full leisure to display his



valour. Macbeth is driven into guilt by the instigations of others; his early principles of virtue are not extinct in him; distracted by remorse, he forgets the approach of danger in the contemplation of his crimes; and never recurs to his valour for support, till the presence of the enemy rouses his whole soul, and conscience is repelled by the necessity for exertion.

It is now shown, that Macbeth has a just right to the reputation of intrepidity; that he feels no personal fear of Banquo and Macduff; and that he meets equal, if not superior, trials of fortitude, as calmly as Richard: It may, therefore, be pre-



sumed, that no future Critic or Commentator in his observations on Shakspeare, will ascribe either the virtuous scruples of Macbeth, or his remorseful agonies, to so mean a cause as constitutional timidity. If so mistaken a persuasion could prevail, it would entirely counteract the salutary effect of the finest tragedy that has ever been written, and defeat the moral purpose to which, in every age, the Stage has been indebted for the favour and the works of wise and virtuous men, and the protection and support of all good governments.

THE END.













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Kemble, John Philip,

Macbeth, and King Richard the Third an essay, in answer to remarks on some  
of the characters of Shakespeare

London 1817

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